

**Testimony in Support of
H.B. 6758, An Act Concerning Staffing for Certain Roles
at the Department of Education**

Lisa Hammersley, Executive Director
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Chairmen McCrory and Currey, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of H.B. 6758, An Act Concerning Staffing for Certain Roles at the Department of Education.

We support the bill's provisions to ensure the State Department of Education hires and maintains a minimum number of special education evaluators to help support Connecticut's growing population of students with disabilities and their diverse, wide-ranging needs. Additionally, we support the bill's requirement that the Department employ at least one curriculum coordinator to help districts implement courses dedicated to important issues, such as African-American and black studies, Puerto Rican and Latino studies, Native American studies, Asian American and Pacific Islander studies, Holocaust and genocide education and awareness, and many more outlined in statute.

Additionally, H.B. 6758 touches on an issue that has been a cause of concern for parents, superintendents, boards of education, and education advocates throughout the state for years. That issue is staffing levels at the State Department of Education and the number of positions that are currently vacant.

In the Program Addendum of Governor Lamont's recent budget proposal, nearly 200 full-time positions are listed as vacant. According to the Program Addendum, there are currently more vacant full-time positions at the Department than filled. This is not fair to the Department and its staff, nor are current staffing levels in the best interests of students, teachers, schools, and Connecticut public education as a whole.

A well-staffed, well-resourced State Department of Education is a critical component to student success, district and state accountability, school improvement, and ensuring all children have the opportunity to learn in a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment that meets their academic and social-emotional needs.

An understaffed Department cannot continue to be the status quo. The Department is an essential piece to creating a successful, high-quality Connecticut public education system for all children, and when numerous important positions are left vacant, the effects can be felt in districts throughout the state and ultimately negatively impact students.

As you consider H.B. 6758 and the positive steps it takes, we urge the Committee to think more broadly about how the State Department of Education and its staff can be supported, and how the General Assembly can ensure the Department is properly staffed so it can best support our schools, educators, and students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important piece of legislation, and please feel free to contact me anytime should you have questions or would like to discuss this issue more.

Sincerely,

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About the School and State Finance Project

The School and State Finance Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy organization that works collaboratively with policymakers, communities, and other key stakeholders to develop data-driven solutions that ensure all public school students receive equitable education funding that supports their learning needs.